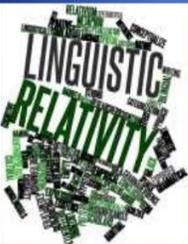
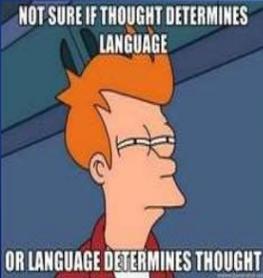


**Daily Life with Christ. Love-13: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love—The fallacy of linguistic relativism.**

<h3>Linguistic Relativity</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• speakers of different languages perceive and experience the world differently, that is, relative to their linguistic background.</li><li>• Which says that the resulting cognitive systems are different in speakers of different languages.</li></ul>	<h3>Linguistic Determinism</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language entirely determines the range of possible cognitive processes of an individual.</li><li>• It is now generally agreed to be false, but weaker forms of correlation are being still studied by many researchers often producing positive empirical evidence for a correlation.</li></ul>
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(Online copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/031218.pdf> and <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

**Characters:** **George** is a Christian who specializes in the study of Scripture in the original languages. He teaches Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek at Oral Roberts University (however, he does not consider himself to be a charismatic believer—he does not believe in speaking in tongues). He is very academically oriented. **Stephen** is a Christian pastor and philosopher who formerly employed what is known as the ICE (isagogs/categories/exegesis) hermeneutical methodology. However, through his study of philosophical realism and church history, he has come to realize the failure of the ICE system and how much Idealism (and nominalism) permeates this methodology. Because of philosophical realism, he now understands precisely how language works with reality. He is attempting to show George how language does not define reality. In this article, **Suzy** enters the conversation. She describes herself as a Christian, but admittedly a very liberal one. She does not believe the Bible is the very Word of God. She thinks that all we need to do is love everyone. Although she calls herself a Christian, she thinks that God saves everyone, no matter what religion one chooses, as long as one is sincere and loving. She does not believe in Hell because she thinks that this would mean that God is not very loving.

**Stephen:** Given that *agape/agapao* in the Old Testament (LXX) and New Testament are used for all kinds of “love,” love for God, God’s love for man, and man’s love for all kinds of evil things, how in the world could anyone claim to obtain objective meaning by means of the original languages? You do see the problem, right?

**George:** Yes, I see what you are saying. But the Bible as written to give us objective truth, and language is inextricably related to truth. I think that the solution to found in discovering how language was used at the time in which it was written—the name for this is isagogs. If you understand how language was used at the time it was written, then one can obtain objectivity.

**Stephen:** But Jesus and John both used *agape/agapao* for both love of God and love for evil things in the world (Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:15). The same word in the original is used for loving God and loving evil—at the same time, same isagogics.

**George:** But you do not understand . . . you have to compare Scripture with Scripture.

**Stephen:** I agree with you that we need to compare Scripture with Scripture for illumination. However, Bible-only inductivism cannot obtain objectivity at a fundamental level. As a matter of fact, as a systematic methodology it is relatively new and came from the anti-realism of scientism—as illustrated in the likes of Francis Bacon. I call it anti-realism because it ignores or rejects philosophical realism and replaces it with comparing Scripture with Scripture in an environment of nominalism. Without a foundation in philosophical realism, you end up with hundreds of denominations who all have their passages to support their positions. It becomes a matter of vicious circular reasoning about language games where different denominations have different spins and focuses on their passages, all the while denying or downplaying passages from opposing systems. Induction can never establish fundamental absolute objectivity. Recall the history of religious wars between Christians—like with Lutherans killing Calvinists and Calvinists killing Lutherans, yet they all believed in the same Christ and all used the same Bible. Neither original languages nor Bible-only inductivism could ever resolve their biblical issues. Consider all the denominations today—most all of them have their favorite verses to counter verses used by others. It is all entirely subjective. I am not denying the crucial importance of comparing Scripture with Scripture. What I am denying is that it can be a foundation for objectivity. And as I have shown, original languages do not resolve crucial theological controversies among factions.

**Suzy [a young lady carrying a gym bag that has “LOVE” in big letters on it, enters the picture]:** I could not help overhearing your conversations about love. Love is a wonderful thing. I think to understand love you must experience it. I appreciate what you two are saying, but do you think you might be overanalyzing love? Love is fundamental to all blessings. We are to just love everyone! Love is the answer to everything. If we had more love, different denominations would not even exist. More love would bring unity among all Christians! If we had more love, all wars would end. Love is what it is all about. As the Beatles sang, “ALL WE NEED IS LOVE!”

**George:** But love must be define! Love is not just about feelings!

**Stephen:** I agree, but how do you define it, George? As we have noted, you are unable to define love based on the original Greek words *agape/agapao*, given that that word refers to the highest and purest loves as well as the most debased and satanic lusts—again, the same word is used for both. And it is not like you can add up, by induction, all the references to love to come up with a fundamental and universal definition of love. . . and the Bible never gives a comprehensive and universal definition of love that applies to all instances of its use of “love.”

**George:** I still think we can get to the meaning through the original languages and find the meaning in how the words are used in that culture—by isagogics.

**Stephen:** What do you mean?

**George:** Well . . . Perhaps we can find evidence in the way love was understood at the time the passage was written that would explain why love is used for God and for evil. We need to find out how the original writers of Scripture thought about love. In other words, we need to get back to the meaning in the mind of the writers of Scripture to find out what they meant by love.

**Stephen:** Are you saying that the meaning is based on the mind of the writers of Scripture? And that each culture thought differently?

**George:** Yes, I was taught that that was why God picked the Greek language, because in Greek one can think more precisely.

**Stephen:** Are you saying that language determines thought? That one's culture, Greek for instance, determines the way people think, and that we need to get into the mind of the writer of Scripture to understand what he means?

**George:** Yes, surely you see the difference between Hebrew, which is more picturesque, and Greek, which is more technical.

**Stephen:** Yes, there are differences, but I deny that culture and language determines thinking patterns or how people learn. The myth of linguistic relativity has been debunked back in the 1960s—you know the theory of Humboldt and Boas of linguistic determinism. It was debunked and replaced by recognition of the universal nature of language and cognition. The conclusion of “Boas’ Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax” has been thoroughly refuted by Geoff Pullum (the myth that Eskimos had more words for snow and therefore perceived the world differently than those who did not live where it snowed).

**George:** So, you do not believe that language has anything to do with how a person thinks?

**Stephen:** I do not deny the influence of language. I deny, along with modern linguists, that language is determinative. I would add that if you buy into linguistic relativism or that meaning is located in the mind of the writer of Scripture, it is impossible for you to claim objectivity. For, if thought patterns of people of the Old Testament or New Testament were different than ours, then the claim that you can obtain objective meaning from their writings is impossible. Even more hopeless is the idea that the meaning of what they wrote is based on their minds—given that they are dead, you have no contact with their minds to discover the meaning.

**George:** Are you saying that meaning is not based on minds?

**Stephen:** Yes! Meaning is in the extra-mental world. It is in reality, which the mind has the power to abstract from. Meaning is in things of the world, not in minds.

**George:** So, if one cannot get objectivity from the original languages, or from culture, or from reconstructing the mind of the writers, where does one get objective meaning?

**Stephen:** From beings! From reality! From the extra-mental objects! From the metaphysical reality in things! The meaning of every Bible passages is not in a word, it is not in a long-lost culture's language, and it is not in the mind of the author. It is in the Text. Every passage is made up of form and matter. The form is the whatness of the extra-mental reality and the matter is the materiality of the ink, paper, or electronics in an electronic bible.

**George:** I am not sure I understand this. Again: what is your ultimate foundation for objectivity?

**Stephen:** Reality! The nature of beings and the law of contradiction. This is all you need for objectivity. The nature of the human mind to abstract reality is the same from Adam, through the Old Testament, New Testament, and today. The natures of what they wrote about are the same for all generations, they are not culturally dependent. All the foundations you are affirming change—original language changes, culture and morals change, and even some passages you ignore in your cherry-picking inductive Bible method contain cultural accommodations (polygamy, executing a rebellious child, slavery, wife obeying husband in all things, and obeying the immoral dictator Nero) that you would not endorse. It does seem like most conservative Christians and virtually all self-described Bible-only believers are more in agreement with me (on basing government on the nature of beings = natural law), whether they realize it or not, than in an exclusively inductive use of the Bible, which does not universally condemn big government (cf., King David's Kingdom or Nero's Roman Empire). Why do you think this is?

**George:** But God wants man to be free! It says it right in the Bible, and in the original: Galatians 5:1, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

**Stephen:** Yes, I agree. But the passage you quote refers to not being subject to legalism. Paul never tells readers of the New Testament to seek to freedom from government or from their earthly slave owners. As a matter of fact, he tells slaves to obey masters "in all things," Col. 3:22. Do you believe that slaves should obey their masters in "all things?"

**George:** No! Not everything!

**Stephen:** Why? Can you tell me why on the basis of Bible-only inductivism and the original languages of Scripture—without philosophical reasoning? I doubt you could even show me that limited government is a better option than big government if the only evidence you could use was Bible-only inductivism and the original languages of Scripture. As a matter of fact, given that the Bible is supernatural revelation, Bible-only inductivism seems to be expressly prohibited as a basis for human rights in our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these Truth to be *self-evident*, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." This fits perfectly with philosophical realism. It does not with fit with cultural relativism or Bible-inductivism (which is all about special revelation—not what is self-evident).

**George:** But do you not agree that Christianity made American great?

**Stephen:** Yes, but that is not the question. The question is universal objective principles that established our country. It was the self-evident *nature* of man. Likewise, all objective

interpretation must be based on the nature of beings, not original languages of Scripture or Bible-only inductivism (merely comparing Scripture with Scripture).

**George:** Can we get back to Scripture instead of American government? Can you show me an example of your law of being of reality and the law of non-contradiction . . . how it is superior to the combination of original languages (exegesis) + cultural differences (isagogics) + Bible-inductivism (categories)?

**Stephen:** Sure. But first I want to illustrate further the failure of your system in obtaining critical biblical truths that are fundamental to how we view the God of the Bible. This is more serious than issues related to American government. For example, the Bible says that God has arms, legs, a back, remembers, forgets, and even repents. The original languages do not help at all, these passages are correctly translated. The Bible really does say God has body parts. While one might think that Bible-only inductivism can resolve the problem, it cannot. This can be seen in a truly Bible-only inductivistic commentary by Finis Dake. In Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, he takes the passage that says that God is Spirit, and combines it with passages that ascribe legs, arms, and back to God and concludes that God has a spirit-body—and that there are three of them. In other words, for Dake God has body parts like us, except that these parts have a spiritual substance: God has spiritual legs, arms, and back. Can you refute Dake either by the original languages of Scripture (exegesis) or by the Bible-only inductive method (categories) or by some cultural/linguistic understanding (isagogics)—by those methods you claim for objectivity?

**George:** I am sure that I can. But let me think about it. How about you, can you show me how you resolve this issue with your hermeneutics of the law of being + principle noncontradiction?